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THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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NO. 42

Malawian pastor perseveres despite tragedy

LIMBE, Malawi (BP) — Pastor Samuel Chilokoteni drums his hand on the pulpit, keeping time to a hymn.

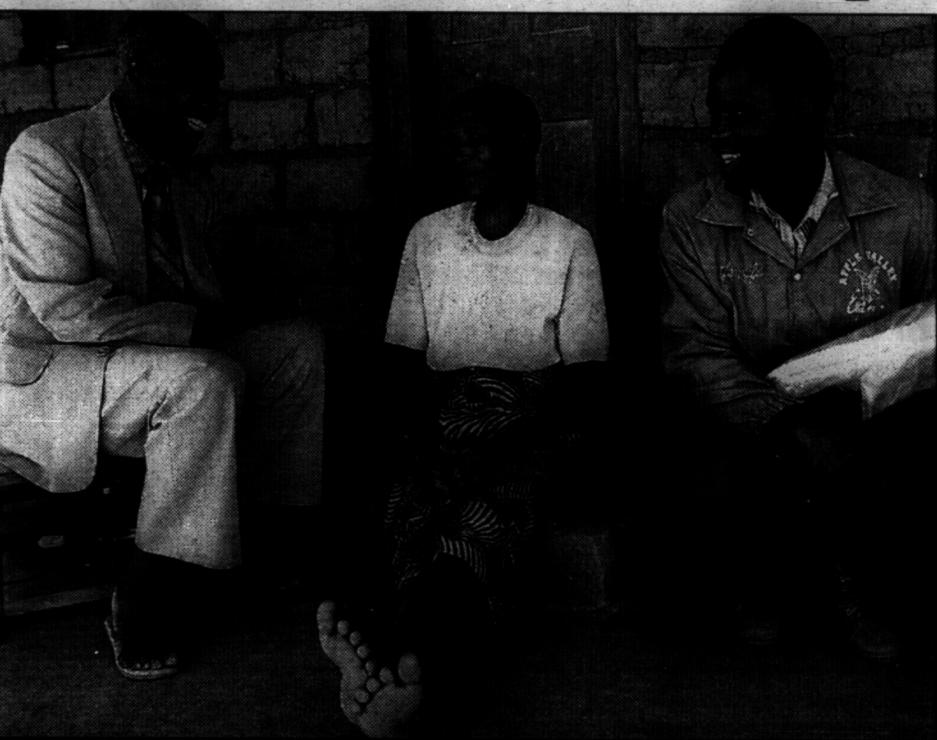
There's no microphone on the podium at this rural, dirt-floored church near Blantyre, Malawi. But you can clearly hear his voice above the others.

"There is power, power, wonder-working power," he sings enthusiastically in Chewa, the main tribal language in this part of Malawi, a tiny country in southeastern Africa. Chilokoteni, 61, is well acquainted with God's power. In his 20 years as a Christian — half of those as a pastor — that power has carried him through plenty of trials. The toughest of those have come during his current pastorate at Jerusalem Baptist Church in Limbe, Malawi.

The day after he moved there as pastor in 1993, one of his adult sons died. Since then four more of his grown children have died, too. All of these deaths are thought to be from AIDS or AIDS-related illnesses.

But in Malawi — where the average life expectancy is just 41 years and AIDS has reached epidemic proportions — Malawians aren't preoccupied with the cause of death. "Death is just death here," explains an International Mission Board missionary who recently transferred from Malawi to The Last Frontier.

As a regional leader of the Baptist Convention of Malawi, Chilokoteni travels as often as he can to Malawian Baptist churches. Developing church leaders is a top priority for Chilokoteni and missionaries who work with him.



LIKE A ROCK — In a village near Malawi's border with Mozambique, Malawian Baptist pastor Samuel Chilokoteni (left) enjoys a reunion with Mozambican Baptist pastor Luciano Phiri (right) and Phiri's aunt. Chilokoteni started a church in this area and led Phiri to Christ while working with Mozambican war refugees a decade ago. (BP photo by Warren F. Johnson)

One of those leaders is Luciano Phiri, 35. Phiri met Chilokoteni about a decade ago after arriving in Malawi as a refugee from neighboring Mozambique. Phiri and his family fled their home to escape a brutal civil war. Chilokoteni then was serving as a Baptist chaplain to Mozambican refugees who poured across Mozambique's border into Malawi. During his nearly three years in that role, he personally led more than 4,000 Mozambican refugees to faith in Jesus Christ. Phiri is one of them.

"When he started visiting

and witnessing to us, I didn't take him seriously," says Phiri. "I didn't understand what he was doing. But finally I came to realize that what he was saying about Jesus is true, that this path is the only one to follow. So I repented and gave my life to the Lord."

Chilokoteni helped disciple Phiri, who then began witnessing to other refugees. Later Phiri felt God's call to be a pastor, too.

With Chilokoteni's help and encouragement, Phiri was accepted as a student at Malawian Baptists' Bible school. His studies there pre-

pared him for returning to minister in his homeland in 1993 — a year after the war ended.

Since then Phiri has started four Baptist churches in Mozambique, near its border with Malawi. To reach some of them, he and fellow Baptists ride bikes about 40 kilometers each way.

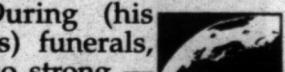
He's also working to improve his skills as a pastor. He and some lay leaders in Mozambique travel weekly across the border to attend Theological Education by Extension classes taught by Eric Laffoon, IMB missionary in Dedza, Malawi. Laffoon grew up in Tanzania, the son of IMB missionaries.

The studies have helped him see that "without God's power, I can do nothing," says Phiri.

That's long been an important truth for his Malawian mentor.

"Some people have asked my wife and me why we're still here," Chilokoteni says of his grief-filled pastorate at Jerusalem church. "But we can't run from our troubles. Troubles will always be with us. When we tell people we want to stay here to work for the Lord, it's an encouragement to them."

That kind of attitude encourages Chilokoteni's colleagues in ministry, too. "I've learned so much from him, seeing him bury his kids, seeing how much he loves his family," says a missionary who's worked with him. "During (his children's) funerals, he was so strong — like a pillar, a rock."



Looking back

10 years ago

A group of 13 members from Parkway Church, plus one member from Highland Church, both in Jackson, travel to Barao d' Taquara, a suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to build a chapel. Harim Powell, a Parkway member and former Mission Service Corp volunteer, organizes the trip.

20 years ago

The Religious Drama Class of Mississippi College is performing "The Harrowing Hell," by William L. Hendricks, as their production for the fall semester. Cast members include Tom Martin of Yazoo City, Cynthia Hammack of Natchez, and Kay Cassibry of Gulf Breeze, Fla.

30 years ago

W. E. Green, president of Clarke Memorial College in Newton, is elected president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. J. Reese Rogers, pastor of Salem Church, Collins, is elected first vice president, and Ralph Hester, a Jackson businessman and outstanding lay worker from First Church, Jackson, is elected second vice president.

WONDER
Working
POWER

Lottie Moon
Christmas Offering for
International Missions

NATIONAL GOAL:
\$110,000,000

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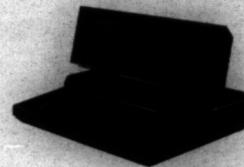
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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Defining who (and whose) we are

Journalists know by education and experience that there are two distinct elements to virtually every news story they are assigned to report.

There's the straight news element, which consists of the tightly-written, dispassionate who/what/when/where/why/how that appears under a big headline on the front page.

Then there's the human interest element — the part of the story that tugs at our hearts, or compels a tear, or reaffirms our faith in people, or, sometimes, moves us to get involved.

If you're looking for the straight news story on the Mississippi Baptist disaster relief effort for the Honduran victims of Hurricane Mitch, you can find it on the opposite page under the big headline. It's filled with facts and figures and photographs of who did what and where they did it.

You should also know about the human interest element of this story, however, because it's the part that defines us as followers of Christ in ways that cannot be told in a straight news story. That's the essence of this column.

A letter was received by the Mississippi Brotherhood Department early on in the Honduras disaster relief effort, from an elderly Mississippi widow. Tucked inside were five dollars with the notation (paraphrased): "I live alone on Social Security, but I want to do my part to help those starving people. Please give this money to them. I know it isn't much."

Yes, m'am, it is much. Jesus himself said so in Luke 21:1-4. Of the nearly \$1,000,000 in food and cash collected for Hondurans, your sacrificial gift and others like it are the ones noted by our Savior.

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us of what's really important in your eyes. We needed that.

Then there were the countless disaster

relief volunteers who organized, packed, and loaded 15 oceangoing containers each weighing 40 tons. Most had never been within a mile of such containers, but they braved darkness and fog in the middle of a Camp Garaywa night, utilizing little more than pickup headlights to get those truck-mounted containers loaded and back on the highway to the Port of Gulfport as soon as possible.

The fact that it was highly dangerous work under awful conditions cannot be overstated, but Mississippi Baptist disaster

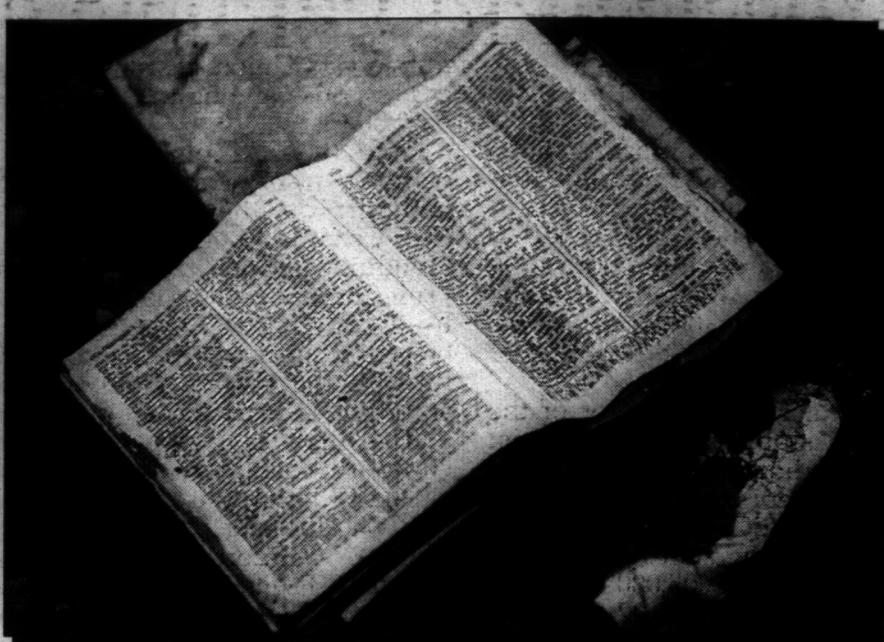
relief volunteers didn't shy away from their commitment to the people of Honduras.

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us that following Christ is not meant to be safe, comfortable, or even dry, and that casualties are always possible as part of the cost of being a Christian. We needed that.

Have you considered the fact that nearly 1,000,000 pounds of food was abruptly removed from our own supply (to send to Honduras), and no one noticed? That 1,000,000 pounds of food wasn't even a blip on our radar screen.

Have you thought about what would occur in many countries around the world if 1,000,000 pounds of food was all of a sudden taken out of their supply?

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us to



EVERYTHING GONE BUT THE PROMISE — This Bible, found in the mud behind a Honduran house after Hurricane Mitch ravaged Central America, was one of the few possessions the Leon Padilla family salvaged. "We have lost everything," Leon Padilla said, "but we know that God's grace is sufficient in this situation." (BP photo by Warren F. Johnson)

be good stewards of the unprecedented, seemingly-unlimited abundance you have given to American Christians. We needed that.

What will be the next record-setting adventure upon which God will send Mississippi Baptists? How high will he set the bar next time?

Only God knows, but he knows he can count on us.

Doesn't it feel good to be a part of a body of believers who will go anywhere, overcome any obstacle, give up anything, and risk everything to answer the clear call of the Savior? In a sentence, that's who we really are.

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us what a privilege it is to be Mississippi Baptists. We needed that.

The local librarian insisted he could not expect to provide books for the community without lights by which to read, so he asked for some of the oil. One needy request followed another.

Finally, a stormy night came and the light house was needed to warn passing ships of the dangerous rocks, but before daybreak the lamp ran out of oil. That night, a ship struck the rocks and went down with the loss of many lives.

At the inquest, the light house keeper said he was sorry. There were so many needy requests and he was only trying to help people. The authorities reminded him, "You were given oil for one purpose, and one purpose only — to light that lamp!"

We have not been given church in order to have a softball team or the biggest singing Christmas tree in town. We have church for one purpose, and one purpose only — to proclaim the Gospel of Christ!

If a church loses sight of that, history will pass it by. As you gather to study Scripture and worship during these beautiful Fall days, don't forget our true purpose.

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE:



Church: light house deprived of fuel?

By Carl M. White, Associate Editor

ing business. Thus, we have ESPN, not Sports Illustrated TV.

The Swiss watch industry, which once totally dominated watch making in the world, failed to realize they were in the time measurement business, not the Swiss mainspring and works business. Thus, the quartz watch, which took over the market, came from Japanese companies like Seiko, not from a Swiss company.

The common moral of these lessons simply is that it can be fatal for an organization to forget its purpose.

What is the purpose of the church? If we cannot scripturally answer that question, we are in danger of being left on the sidelines of history as irrelevant to the needs of a changing society.

I am convinced the church is not here to provide activities for every age group and interest group in the membership. Nor is the church here to provide community enrichment through the advancement of the arts.

While these are worthwhile and needed in any community, if a church spends all its energy in these endeavors, there will be little energy left for the church's real purpose.

It's like the light house keeper who was delivered a full barrel of fuel oil for the huge lamp. The delivery was intended to last all winter.

A woman in town was concerned that she and her children would freeze to death, so she asked the keeper if he would not spare her a little oil.

Mississippi Baptists answer plea for food

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Mississippi Baptists led the way among four states that banded together in recent weeks to offer food relief to Honduran victims who lost everything during Hurricane Mitch, described by some experts as the "Storm of the Century."

Paul Harrell, director of the Mississippi Baptist Brotherhood Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), said a total of 968,000 pounds of food valued at more than \$605,000 — 12,352 boxes packed in 22 massive oceangoing containers — were contributed to the disaster relief effort.

Included in that amount were three containers from Texas Baptists, three containers from Alabama Baptists, one container from Tennessee Baptists, and the remainder from Mississippi Baptists, according to Harrell.

Baptists in the four states also contributed almost \$314,000 in cash for the relief effort, he added. The Mississippi Brotherhood Department and the Mississippi Woman's

Missionary Union coordinated the response among the state's Baptists.

The food shipments are being transported from Gulfport on the Mississippi Gulf Coast to Puerto Cortes in Honduras aboard Standard Fruit Company ships, normally used to bring Honduran banana exports to U.S. markets through the Port of Gulfport, according to Harrell.

The ships leave empty from Gulfport each Monday and arrive in Puerto Cortes each Thursday, he said.

From Puerto Cortes, Standard Fruit Company has been contracted to deliver the food to the town of La Ceiba in northern Honduras using the company's overland transportation equipment, Harrell reported.

A warehouse in La Ceiba has been donated as a repository for the food, Harrell said, and pastors of Honduran Baptist churches will be responsible for delivery of the food across northern Honduras.

Because of the devastation Hurricane Mitch wreaked on the country's transportation system, some of the food will have to be delivered by horseback and mule to more

remote areas, Harrell pointed out.

A six-member Mississippi Baptist disaster relief team arrived back in the state on Dec. 1 after a week in Honduras overseeing the unloading and transportation of the food, he said, and a second six-member team is scheduled to leave Dec. 6 for a week in Honduras.

Ken Cummins, a Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) missionary stationed in La Ceiba, is helping coordinate the effort.

Harrell also reported:

- a six-member Mississippi Baptist medical relief team is serving in La Ceiba from Nov. 28-Dec. 5, with a second six-member medical team scheduled for Dec. 5-12 and a third six-member medical team scheduled for Dec. 12-19.

- recruiting is underway for 16 medical-dental teams that will travel to Honduras during 1999.

- the Mississippi Baptist Agri-Missions Fellowship is putting together an assessment team that will travel to Honduras to determine the best ways to help Honduran farmers reclaim damaged crop land, including gifts of seed and fertilizer.

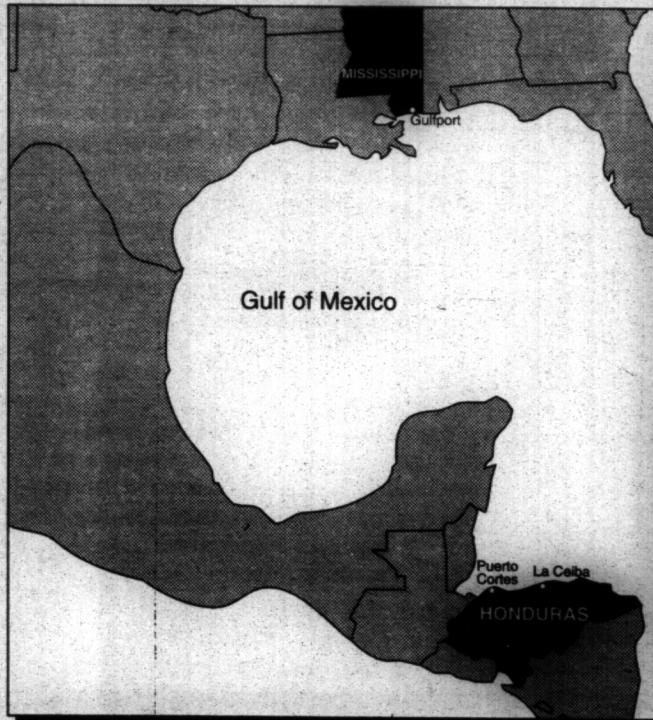
- the Mississippi Brotherhood Department is working with IMB on a long-term response plan that will include a call for Mississippi Baptist construction teams early next year to help reconstruct homes for the Honduran hurricane victims.

"This is the greatest outpouring of concern I have seen during my 33 years in the Mississippi Brotherhood Department. It reflects the heart Mississippi Baptists have always had for missions and outreach.

"It would be difficult to overestimate the opportunities for witnessing on behalf of our Savior that will grow from this response," Harrell said.

Harrell pointed out that food collection activities have ceased, but concerned Mississippians can still make monetary gifts to the relief effort.

"Funds will be received as long as people want to contribute. The contributions will be transferred to IMB and made available to Southern Baptist missionaries in the area specifically for disaster relief," he said.



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

Record

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Checks should be made out to MBCB, clearly marked "For Honduras disaster relief," and mailed to the MBCB Business Office at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

For information on the Honduras disaster relief effort, contact the Mississippi Brotherhood Department at the above address. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

For information on volunteering for disaster relief service in Honduras, contact the Mississippi Baptist Partnership Missions Office at the above address and telephone numbers.

For a report on Southern Baptist Convention-wide disaster relief efforts in central America, please turn to page four of this issue.



NIGHT LOADING — James Booth (left) of First Church, Terry, and Bobby Kennedy of Pearl Valley Church, Wesson, wrestle a two-pallet stack of emergency food supplies into the rear of an 18-wheeler bound on the night of Nov. 18 for the Mississippi Gulf Coast, where it will be shipped to Hondurans devastated last month by Hurricane Mitch. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



PACKING IT IN — Marion Sessums (above, left) of First Church, Clinton, and Mary Booth of First Church, Terry, load boxes of loose dry goods Nov. 16 at Camp Garaywa in Clinton for shipment to Honduras. Paul Hill (below, left) and Bill Lee, both members of First Church, Brandon, make sure pallets of food at Camp Garaywa are packed tight so a tarp can be stretched over the top to prevent moisture damage. (Photos by William H. Perkins Jr.)



Southern Baptists join disaster relief effort

RICHMOND, Va. (BP and local reports) — Southern Baptists have responded dramatically to the needs of hurricane victims in the Caribbean and Middle America — giving not only money and goods, but themselves.



FEEDING THE CHILDREN

— Communion Baptist Church, in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, is feeding the children of families stranded at a shelter after losing their homes to flooding rivers or mud slides. More than 1 million people across Honduras were left homeless after Hurricane Mitch struck the country the last week of October. (BP photo by Warren F. Johnson)

Across the country, Southern Baptist churches large and small collected money, food, clothing and medical supplies.

When International Mission Board missionaries requested 42 volunteer teams for relief projects in Middle America, Southern Baptists responded so readily that 38 of the requests were filled in four days.

Southern Baptist International mission Board (IMB) trustees, meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in connection with a

largest-ever appointment service and the annual meeting of the Florida Baptist Convention, voted to earmark up to \$1 million for relief efforts in Middle America.

Even as this action was taken, disaster relief funds were pouring into the board's headquarters in Richmond, Va. More than \$220,000 came in within a week's time.

In Anniston, Ala., Parker Memorial Church organized a collection for Honduras.

"The response has been amazing," said Ann Priddy, one of the leaders of the effort. "We have people coming from everywhere."

The Parker Memorial Church collection was shipped to Honduras as part of nearly 1,000,000 pounds of food gathered and processed by Mississippi Baptists (*please see article on page three*).

In Germantown, Tenn., Acteens collected \$11,000 toward the purchase of 1,000 mattresses requested by missionaries in the Dominican Republic, another hard-hit area.

The Germantown church is in the process of shipping 100,000 pounds of rice, 30,000 to 40,000 pounds of beans and 10,000 gallons of cooking oil to the Dominican Republic.

In addition, a 14-member team, led by pastor Sam Shaw, a former IMB missionary to the Dominican Republic, made a week-long journey to the island to prayer walk and seek ways the church can continue to help both in relief and evangelism.

Frank Drinkard, a former staff member of the Germantown church, is now an IMB missionary in the Dominican Republic.

Previous contacts with Baptists in countries battered by hurricanes Georges and

Mitch paved the way for relief efforts.

When news of the disaster in Honduras broke, IMB missionary Joyce Harms was in Memphis. She and her husband, David, serve in Honduras.

Joyce Harms relayed immediate needs to Bellevue Church, Cordova, which responded within three days with \$20,000 and 35,000 pounds of food and medical supplies. Executives of Federal Express who are members of Bellevue Church arranged for a Boeing 727 to deliver the relief materials to Honduras.

Texas Baptist Men delivered three water purifiers bought and shipped with IMB hunger funds, as well as generators and more than three tons of food and medicine, to Honduras.

David Lema, director of Hispanic ministries for the Miami (Fla.) Baptist Association, took a group from the association and Spanish-speaking health care providers to Honduras, where they evaluated how they could plug into needs there.

A pastor and two members of Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur, a Spanish-speaking Baptist church in San Francisco, Calif., were in El Salvador helping with a water purification project.

A team of Southern Baptist volunteer coordinators from Tennessee, Texas, and North Carolina led by IMB volunteer missions coordinator Bill Cashion and the North American Mission Board's Mickey Caisson will make a 10-day assessment trip to Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador in December.

'Biblical City' slated Dec. 10-12 in Calhoun City

CALHOUN CITY, Miss. (Special) — A total of eight Calhoun County Baptist Churches are joining together to recreate the town of Bethlehem for the second annual Biblical City on Dec. 10-12 in Calhoun City.

"This event is a real memory-maker for younger children, and a spiritual experience for all ages that will not soon be forgotten. It is like stepping back in time to the first century," said Geneise Hitt, president of the Tri-County Homemakers organization which is sponsoring the special event.

Hitt said the 36 scenes will have more than 200 characters portraying roles that include shop keepers, Pharisees, families, beggars, lepers, and Roman soldiers. The market place scene will contain lambs, sheep, goats, donkeys, camels, and other animals, she added.

Among the Baptist churches participating and their roles are:

- Pleasant Hill Church, Calhoun City; manger scene.
- Sabougla Church, Calhoun City; shepherd scene with camels.
- Bethany Church, Slate Springs; the Inn, basket-weaving, and well scenes.
- Big Creek

Church, Big Creek; variety of characters.

- Midway Church, Vardaman; brick-making scene.
- Derma Church, Derma; scribe scene.
- First Church, Calhoun City; fashions of the day.
- Second Church, Calhoun City; home life scene.

Other scenes include a blacksmith shop, synagogue, Hebrew school, prison, tax

assessor, king's court, meat market, and several more.

Biblical City will be open on Dec. 10-12 from 6-9 p.m. each night. Admission is free. Churches are encouraged to bring vans and buses. More than 10,000 visitors are expected, McPhail said.

For more information, contact McPhail at (601) 628-4237 or the local chamber of commerce at (601) 628-6990.

MBC highlights to telecast Dec. 6-13

Highlights of the 163rd annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Oct. 27-28 in Jackson will be telecast Dec. 6-13 on ACTS (Odyssey Channel) and a number of cable television systems around the state, according to Farrell Blankenship, director of broadcast services at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The highlights videotape, along with videotapes

of convention sermons and the Bible Treasures segments, are available in VHS format. Churches with access to local cable systems are encouraged to request a loaner 3/4-inch videotape.

For more information on these products, contact Broadcast Services at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

CABLE SYSTEM/CHANNEL	DATE	TIME	SPONSOR
Rankin Cablevision/35	Dec. 13	11 a.m.	First Church, Brandon
Cable One, Bruce/2	Dec. 20	11 a.m.	First Church, Bruce
WO7BN, Bruce/7	Dec. 6	6 p.m.	First Church, Calhoun City
Galaxy Cablevision, Calhoun City/27	Dec. 9	6 p.m.	First Church, Cleveland
Cable One, Cleveland/10	Dec. 10	7 p.m.	ACTS of Greenville
TCA Cable, Greenville/60	Dec. 7-11	9 a.m.	First Church, Hattiesburg
Comcast, Hattiesburg/6	Dec. 8	11 a.m.	
	Dec. 10	7 p.m.	
	Dec. 7	3 p.m.	
	Dec. 9	7 p.m.	
	Dec. 11	9 p.m.	
	Dec. 13	11 a.m.	
Time Warner, Jackson/40	Dec. 10	4:45 p.m.	ACTS of Jackson
Northland Cable, Kosciusko/2	Dec. 13	5:30 p.m.	First Church, Kosciusko
Heritage Cablevision, New Albany/13	Dec. 6	5:30 p.m.	First Church, New Albany
Galaxy Cablevision, Poplarville/39	Dec. 13	5:30 p.m.	Poplarville Local Access
Cable One, Yazoo City/10	Dec. 9	5 p.m.	First Church, Yazoo City
	Dec. 7	8 p.m.	
	Dec. 10	8 p.m.	



DRESSING THE PART — Darrel Turner (right) pastor of Bethany Church, Slate Springs, his wife Melanie (left) and daughter Sarah prepare to reenact the manger scene for the Biblical City event Dec. 10-12 in Calhoun City. Biblical City is designed to accurately portray life in Bethlehem at the time of Christ's birth. (BR special photo)

Thanksgiving has come and gone at the speed of light.

You barely get the dishes washed and the leftover turkey put away before there is an unstoppable avalanche of sales notices demanding that you be a part of the largest shopping day of the year.

Just for a moment it was good to pause, to think, to thank, and to remember that every good and perfect gift comes from above.

Would you pause again and give thanks, but this time think about thanking God not just for the wonderful blessings he has poured out upon your life, but thanking him for the things that did not happen?

Oh, if we only knew how many crises were missed this past year!

While God blesses us with so many good things, his greatest blessings may be in the things that did not come our way.

For a few minutes I want you to think about "un-Thanksgiving." By that I do not mean not to give God thanks,



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

but to give God thanks for the things that did not happen.

For example, I am thankful for:

- ◆ Storms that did not hit.
- ◆ Accidents that did not occur.
- ◆ Marriages that did not take place.
- ◆ Surgeries that were not necessary.
- ◆ Wars that did not break out.
- ◆ Telephone calls in the middle of the night that turned out to be wrong numbers rather than family emergencies.
- ◆ Fires that did not start in our home.
- ◆ Collisions, close calls, wrecks, and injuries that did not happen.
- ◆ Flat tires that I did not have in the rain.
- ◆ Airplanes that did not crash.
- ◆ Bones I did not break.
- ◆ Floods that did not happen.
- ◆ Heart attacks I did not have.
- ◆ Thousands and thousands of Christians across Mississippi who have not stopped going to church, serving, and giving.
- ◆ The spouse who has not left me.
- ◆ Parents who did not give up on me.
- ◆ My children who are not on drugs.
- ◆ Tumors that were not malignant.
- ◆ The Savior who does not

IT ALL BEGAN IN
THE MANGER
OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO.
TODAY, THE PROPHECIES
CONTINUE TO UNFOLD...

TRIBULATION
FORCE

HOW MANY ON YOUR CHRISTMAS
LIST WILL GET LEFT BEHIND?

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON
THE FUTURE IS CLEAR

leftbehind.com

stop loving.

◆ Our great God who does not stop forgiving!

Certainly, this is only a beginning list, a list to which we can add, that if we all concentrate, we would fill up The Baptist Record with "un-Thanksgiving."

Celebrate this week in the glow of Thanksgiving and the anticipation of Christmas — and remember the "un-Thanksgiving" events of your own life.

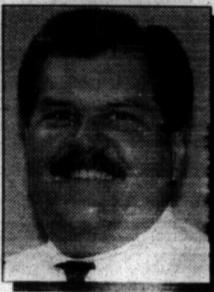
'God with Us' England tour planned for July 29-Aug. 10

Bryan Pannell, president of Covenant Ministries International, Inc., a Clinton-based ministry organization, is seeking musicians to tour England July 29-Aug 10 to perform "God With Us."

While plans are incomplete at this time, Pannell intends to take around 40 people to tour schools, parks, and churches in England, Scotland, and Wales. The cost of the trip is estimated at \$1,600-\$2,100 per person.

Since its release by Integrity Music in April 1994, "God With Us," has set sales records and a new standard for non-seasonal worship music, according to an Integrity Music press release.

PEWS
• highest quality
• great prices
• 100% financing available
THEATER SEATS
• highest quality
• most quiet chair available
• great prices
• 100% financing available
REFINISHING/RE-UPHOLSTERY
• America's most experienced pew finisher
• all fabrics are teflon treated
CARPET
• our service includes removing, storing and reinstalling the existing pews
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Due to limited rehearsal time, Pannell is seeking musicians who have previously performed "God With Us."

For information, contact Pannell at 1102 Laurelwood Drive, Clinton, MS 39056; or by e-mail at covenant@misnet.com.

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Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Internationals

1997 LMCO Gifts Southern Baptist Convention

PER CAPITA GIVING

Mississippi	\$16.07
S. Carolina	\$8.82
N. Carolina	\$8.63
Alaska	\$8.53
Tennessee	\$7.21

DOLLAR INCREASE OVER 1996

Mississippi	\$3,190,047
Tenn.	\$729,718
Ga.	\$523,435
Texas	\$440,030
S. Carolina	\$369,547

PERCENT INCREASE OVER 1996

Mississippi	39.86%
Dist. of Col.	33.34%
Dakotas	27.24%
Alaska	25.45%
Iowa	20.51%

TOTAL DOLLARS

Texas	\$14,529,248
Mississippi	\$11,192,594
N. Carolina	\$10,264,135
Georgia	\$8,448,130
Tenn.	\$5,095,493

Source: IMB

'God moving' along Suriname river

PARMARIBO, Suriname (BP) — A downpour pelts Tim McClard as he floats down the Suriname River in a dugout canoe.

The night is so dark that McClard, a Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary from Farmington, Mo., can hardly see who's in front of him let alone the river ahead, but he's not worried. He knows who's steering the canoe.

It's 39-year-old George Eduard, an evangelical Christian who grew up in the bush country of Suriname, a South American nation that's a former Dutch colony. Eduard, like many men from a tribe called the Saramaccans, knows every rock in this river. He knows them so well he often guides the boat at night without a light.

Tonight when Eduard nears Dang (pronounced DAHNG) Village, he stops the outboard motor and drifts toward the bank. He and his passengers — McClard and some visiting Baptists — get out and slosh toward the village school. There they join a crowd of Saramaccans for worship.

During the service Eduard tells a story about Satan and stresses Jesus' power to overcome evil. That's an intriguing topic for Saramaccans, descendants of African slaves who escaped from Dutch plantations in the 17th and 18th centuries. Today Saramaccans retain many African traditions, including voodoo and animism. Their religion — called "Kunu" — revolves around evil spirits. "The evil is real —



SET FREE — Using a Scripture card with a picture of the cross on it, George Eduard tells the crucifixion story to children from the Saramaccan tribe, an unreached people group in Suriname's bush country. Eduard, a Saramaccan believer, works with IMB missionaries on a church-planting team targeting the Saramaccan people. (BP photo by Sandy King)

and you can feel it here, but we're trying to show them that the creator of everything loves them and is much more powerful than evil," says McClard's wife, Judy, from Ironton, Mo.

One Saramaccan who has discovered that truth is a woman who calls herself Maria (Mary) Magdala. Villagers used to pay her to consult a demon they believed spoke through her. But when several of her relatives died, people began rejecting her.

"She felt that even the devil didn't like her," recalls Eduard.

When she heard Eduard preach about Jesus' love, she accepted Christ. "When I prayed with her, the spiritual battle was so intense," Eduard recalls.

After tonight's service, she asks McClard and Eduard to pray for her and her 15-year-old daughter, who has accepted Christ, too. The two will soon take the public stand of baptism in front of a village that's long been a Kunu stronghold. Eduard knows well the pressures that decision might bring them.

Volunteer Steve Nettles witnessed their commitments in amazement. "Other than my own conver-

sion, it was the most spiritually overwhelming moment of my life," he says.

He had a similar response when he saw Magdala's baptism during another volunteer project this summer. "That makes everything worthwhile," said Steve, just after Magdala was baptized with four believers she helped lead to Christ.

"We're seeing God moving along this river like we've never seen before," McClard says. "The power of Satan is being broken here."

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

Top Ten Mississippi Churches

1997 Total Gifts

1. First Church, Brookhaven \$327,377
2. First Church, Jackson 250,000
3. First Church, Columbus 121,825
4. First Church, Natchez 118,679
5. Broadmoor Church, Jackson 97,534
6. First Church, Clinton 65,860
7. First Church, Starkville 60,343
8. Park Place, Brandon 53,893
9. First Church, McComb 52,551
10. Calvary, Tupelo 50,229

Source: MBCB Computer

Christmas Offering International Missions

National Goal:
\$110,000,000

Missionaries, volunteers seeing progress in Ecuador

QUITO, Ecuador (BP) — Every two hours the alarm on Mark Robbins' wristwatch beeps.

The sound isn't supposed to help him remember appointments or to keep him from dozing during boring meetings. Instead, "it's a reminder to pray for my three sons," says Robbins, a Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary in Quito, the capital of Ecuador.

The alarm says a lot about what makes Robbins "tick." So do the frequent e-mail messages he sends to his Southern Baptist prayer partners.

One recent e-mail tells about the day Robbins and Baptist pastor Manuel Pumisacho, a Quichua Indian, stopped along a bluff in the Andes Mountains surrounding Quito. As they looked down over Pumisacho's hometown of Zambiza — on the outskirts of Quito — the pastor began to cry.

"He was moved with compassion for the souls that inhabited the town below," Robbins, from Pensacola, Fla., wrote in his prayer e-mail.

Robbins and Pumisacho stood and prayed for the salvation of the residents of Zambiza, a Roman Catholic stronghold

for more than 400 years. Later Robbins and his wife, the former Diane Pritchett of Wagarville, Ala., began asking others to pray that same prayer.

For a year the Robbinses and their prayer partners prayed doors would open for spreading the gospel in Zambiza, where evangelicals for years have been persecuted by practitioners of a religion that mixes Roman Catholicism and indigenous religions. Robbins enlisted visiting Southern Baptist volunteers to intercede for Zambiza, too. Often he took them to the town square to pray.

"Through the years we've come to realize that prayer is the most important part of what we do," says Mrs. Robbins, whose birthday — Nov. 29 — falls on the first day of Southern Baptists' 1998 Week of Prayer for International Missions. Her husband's birthday — Dec. 6 — marks the end of that week.

Recently God began answering the couple's prayers for Zambiza through a team of medical and dental volunteers from First Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, Fla. First, the mayor of Zambiza granted permission for the volunteers to conduct a clinic. Then when the team arrived, an elementary school director let them lead nightly evangelistic services in the school's auditorium.

During the three-day, evangelistic clinic, volunteers treated about 500 patients. On the end of the last day, volunteers

and missionaries held hands and prayed together in front of the clinic. They asked God "to make an eternal difference in the lives of people we'd ministered to," Robbins recalls.

That night during evangelistic services, eight Ecuadorians accepted Christ. One of them is a man named Pablo, who earlier studied for the priesthood but dropped out to get married. The week after the medical project ended, Robbins and his colleagues started a Bible study in Pablo's house.

"For us (missionaries) on the field, the work of volunteers multiplies what we're able



MAKING FRIENDS — Diane Robbins' background as an elementary school teacher comes in handy in her work as a missionary in Ecuador. Against the backdrop of the Andes Mountains, Robbins (center) helps Ecuadorian children make nametags during Vacation Bible School at San Francisco Baptist Mission near Quito, Ecuador's capital. Nearby, missionary kid Matthew Blanton (left) waits to assist her. (BP photo by Sandy King)

to do," says Mrs. Robbins, who works alongside her husband with volunteers and among Ecuador's Quichua people.

"Often volunteers can open doors that we can't," she said.

Besides the open door in Zambiza, the Florida volunteers also helped Baptists gain entrance into Chachas, another town where evangelicals have been persecuted. In fact, about a decade ago, a mob of townspeople tried to burn down a house where Pumisacho was leading a Bible study. Since then Pumisacho has prayed for the right time to return to share the gospel.

The answer to that prayer came recently when local officials permitted the Florida volunteers to lead medical clinics in Chachas, near Quito. Through the evangelistic clinics, 15 Ecuadorians accepted Christ.

Today Pumisacho leads a Bible study in a home near where he was persecuted years ago. About 50 residents of Chachas recently attended a showing of the "Jesus" film outside that home.

"We've seen God do some incredible things through volunteers," says Robbins.



POOL PAINTING — Mark Robbins (left), a Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary in Quito, Ecuador, and International Service Corps worker Tracy Bateman (right) help paint the swimming pool at La Merced Baptist Camp near Quito during M-fuge Ecuador, a missions training camp for Southern Baptist teens. (BP photo by Sandy King)

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Top Ten Mississippi Churches

1997 Gifts Per Member

1. First Church, Brookhaven	\$198.05
2. Corinth Church, Carthage	176.12
3. Paris Church, Paris	99.84
4. First Church, Natchez	65.21
5. Oak Grove Church, Lake	51.07
6. First Church, Columbus	50.51
7. Clear Creek Church, Lamar	50.00
8. Liberty Church, Toombsboro	48.97
9. Trinity Church, Oxford	47.67
10. Sylvarena Church, Raleigh	43.15

Joining God at work in world

God is at work in our world in wondrous ways. Would you like to join him? Consider these options as starters:

◆ Surf the 'Net. For missions information, start with the International Mission Board site (www.imb.org). There, you'll find links to other Southern Baptist Web sites. Check GOSHEN (Global Online Service Helping Evangelize Nations (www.goshen.net) for a Christian Web resources directory and search engine.

◆ Sock it away. Planning is the key to giving more to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. This year, determine an amount to set aside each week between now and the day your church celebrates the offering. By doing this you can give — and enjoy giving — much more (Prov. 13:11; 2 Cor. 9:6-8).

◆ Step off the sidelines and into the game. Explore whether God has a place for you on mission. You may have a skill needed to target a Last Frontier people group, or be called to plant your life among a people group, showing them daily how Jesus loves them.

If you think short-term overseas service may be for you, contact the Volunteers in Missions Department, International Mission Board, SBC, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond VA 23230-0767; call 1-800-888-8657; or e-mail (vimd@imb.org).

To explore longer-term options, contact Nancy Walker, Initial Contacts Coordinator, International Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond VA 23230-0767; call 1-888-I CAN GO 1 (1-800-422-6461); or e-mail (initial.contacts@imb.org).





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

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UTTERLY AMAZING STATS

Editor:

In the Sept. 24 issue of The Baptist Record, the Guest Opinion writer, pastor Tommy Bufkin, stated that 3,500 people were leaving the church every day. To me, this is utterly amazing, and should break the heart of every Christian everywhere.

For years, I have watched church attendance dwindle, and, like many, I have pondered why. Could it be that we are not hearing the heart of the gospel message? Rarely do we hear that the Blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin! (1 John 1:9). Rarely do we hear of his sacrificial death on the cross for

you and me (Rom. 5:6). Rarely do we hear that he was raised for our justification, and we are now to seek those things which are above (Rom. 4:25, Col. 3:1)!

It may surprise some, but God is not interested in changing my life. Rather, he wants to give me a brand new life!

Someone has rightfully said, "The blood takes care of what I do, and the cross takes care of what I am." The more we meditate on this wonderful fact, the more precious he becomes to us. This is why I think we must preach Christ.

What a wonderful Savior we have!

Bob Bardwell
Calhoun City

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

William Carey College will celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with a Community Christmas Celebration on Dec. 4 at 7 p.m. in Smith Auditorium of Thomas Fine Arts Center on the Hattiesburg campus. Admission to the Celebration is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. The annual campus Christmas lighting ceremony is planned for 5:30 p.m. in front of Lawrence Hall. For more information, call (601) 582-6175.

William Carey Crusader Baseball Camps will be held Dec. 29-31 on campus in Hattiesburg from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. The camp, for ages 7 to 17, will feature John Stephenson, former William

Carey College coach, who currently coaches in the New York Mets system. Applications may be obtained by calling the baseball office at (601) 582-6110 or write Bobby Halford, WCC, 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401-5499.

1999 WINTER BIBLE STUDY CARTOONS AVAILABLE

Editor:

For the fifth year I have prepared a set of cartoons to accompany the Winter Bible Study, which is Joshua this year. These are free for the asking, but we request a \$2 contribution to our church to cover printing, postage, and handling.

The cartoons are self-explanatory and work best when copied onto transparencies for use with an overhead projector.

Write to me at First Baptist Church, P. O. Box 1357, Kenner, LA 70063.

Joe McKeever, pastor
First Church, Kenner, La.

"COULD I ASK THE SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR OF CALED AND JOSHUA TO EMPTY THE GARBAGE?"



Health Care Update

Many questions have arisen about Annuity Board medical plan options for Southern Baptist agencies, institutions, ministers and church staff members in Mississippi. Here is some clarification.

- Effective Jan. 1, 1999, the Annuity Board has a new Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) through Private HealthCare Systems (PHCS). This network does not include Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson, but the **Annuity Board does have a direct contract with the hospital system.** Participants will continue to receive enhanced benefits – discounted rates and lower copayments – when they use this hospital in 1999.
- The Memphis-based Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation (BMHCC) with its Mississippi

affiliates is not currently in the PHCS network, but the **Annuity Board is negotiating an arrangement with the system and all the hospital affiliates.**

Participants will also receive enhanced benefits in 1999 when using a hospital in the BMHCC system.

We apologize for any confusion over your 1999 medical plan options. We look forward to working with you in the future *Serving Those Who Serve the Lord.*



ANNUITY BOARD
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Jerusalem Church, Attala Association, ordained Phil Pettit and Lamar Townsend as deacons on Nov. 8. Pictured (from left) are Bill Pettit, deacon; Paul Cook, chairman of deacons; Johnny Parks, pastor; Townsend, deacon; Phil Pettit, deacon; Terry Pettit, deacon; Sammy Ray, pastor of Peeler Memorial Church, Attala Association, who pastored Jerusalem Church for 25 years. Ray delivered the ordination sermon.

Fred Wolfe will be presenting the Barnabas Ministry at Rolling Creek Church, Quitman, on Sat., Dec. 5, Sun., Dec. 6, and Mon. (Special minister's conference), Dec. 7. For

more information call (601) 659-4882 or 659-7401.

Dana Dykes recently surrendered her life to full-time missions and in recognition received

a certificate from Heucks Retreat Church, Brookhaven. Dykes, a senior at Mississippi College, is the daughter of Danny and Sharon Dykes of Brookhaven.

Dykes

Kathy Lee, a member of First Church of Sharon in Laurel, is available for

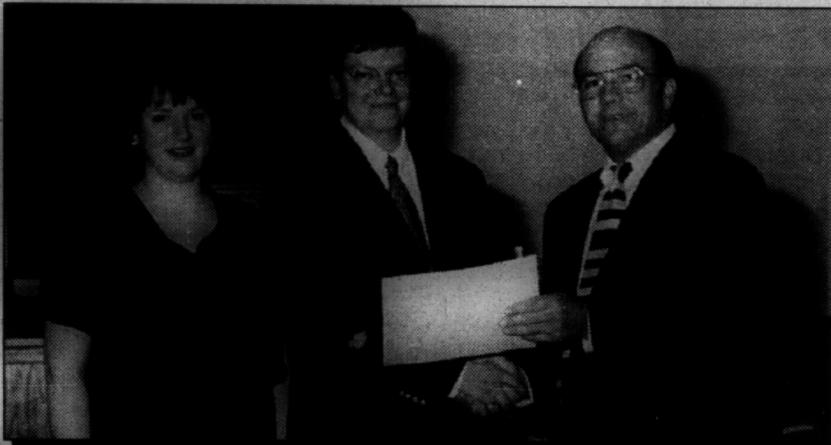
concerts, mini-concerts, or just special music. Lee is the daughter of Lavon "Jelly" Welborn, who was a director of music in local churches. Lee can be contacted by calling the church at (601) 425-2626.



Lee



Chuck McKnight, pastor of The Chapel at Country Haven, was recently licensed to the gospel ministry at Boulevard Church, Southaven. Pictured (from left) are Ronnie Bierbrodt, clerk; McKnight; and Lonnie Riley, pastor of Boulevard Church.



JUST FOR THE RECORD

The adult choir of McLaurin Heights Church, Pearl, will host Charles Billingsley in concert on Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. Billingsley is a former member of NewSong. For more information, call the church at (601) 939-3379.

Algoma Church, Algoma, will have its seventh annual drive-thru nativity on Dec. 11 and 12 from 6-9:30 p.m. It will consist of five scenes portraying the birth of Jesus. For more information, call the church at (601) 489-5846.

Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson, will inaugurate the celebration of the Christmas season on Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. with The Hanging of the Green. This is a special service of decorating the church sanctuary with its Christmas apparel before a background of traditional carols and musical selections. Narratives describing the traditions and symbolism of each item and color of Christmas will guide the worshipper through this service featuring the adult, student, and children's choirs.

singing Color It Christmas. For more information, call the church office at (601) 372-7812.

Crossgates Church, Brandon, Celebration Choir and Orchestra will present "Come! Celebrate Christmas" on Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 6 at 6 p.m., and Dec. 7 at 7:30 p.m. Complimentary tickets are available. For more information, contact the music office at (601) 825-2562.

Baptist Health Systems will hold a 1-hour seminar on ways to beat the holiday blues through laughter for area seniors. The seminar will be held at 10 a.m. at Broadmoor Church, 787 E. Northside Drive, Jackson. There is no fee for the seminar, but pre-registration is requested by calling the Baptist Health Line at (800) 948-6262.

The annual lighting of the star will be observed at the Alumni Center at Clarke College

in Newton on Dec. 5. The 5 p.m. event is the traditional emphasis for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. Call (601) 683-9970 for more information.

Bill Gaither and the Gaither Christmas Homecoming Musical Spectacular will be held at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson on Dec. 5. The concert begins at 6 p.m. Complete information may be obtained by calling (601) 355-5252.



Gaither

Baptist Health Systems has announced the formation of Baptist Home Medical Services LLC. The new company is a joint venture between Baptist and Med South Corp. of Jasper, Ala., which will provide home medical equipment and respiratory equipment services in a network of locations throughout central Mississippi. For more information call (601) 9968-9700.

REVIVAL DATES

Pine Hill, Enterprise: Dec. 6-11; Sunday, 11 a.m., dinner, and 2 p.m. service; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Mike Lee, Greenville Church, Lamar County, evangelist; Gary Kelly, pastor.

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Keyboard Fest deadline looms

The registration deadline for participating in the Mississippi Baptist Area Keyboard Festivals across the state on Jan. 28-30 is Tuesday, Dec. 15 according to Dot Pray, keyboard consultant in the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

For more information, contact the Church Music Department at (601) 968-380 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

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LIFE AND WORK

The gift of life

Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 5:18-20; Ps. 103:1-5; Rev. 22:1-5

By Hugh Plunkett

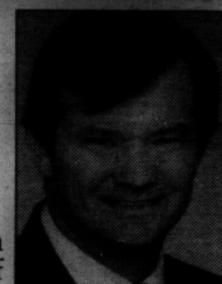
"Give the Gift of Life" has been the plea of health agencies around the world. The gift of life they refer to is blood. Plain, old-fashioned, untainted blood. Without blood, we do not live. Many a life has been saved by the blood given by unselfish donors. Unfortunately, there are many people in this world who would just as soon shed blood as give it. They have forgotten a basic tenet of humanity. Life is a gift from God and is to be celebrated.

Genesis 2:7 tells us that God created Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils: and man became a living soul. Today's scientists have discov-

ered many things in the field of Biogenetics. Test tube babies now are fairly common.

Fertilization outside the womb is a common practice. The cloning of a sheep made headlines worldwide and organ donors daily give people new chances at living normal lives through organ transplants. As heady as all these advances sound, it is vital to remember that we still cannot create life. God alone has the power to give the gift of life and he intends for us to enjoy life!

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 tells us how our Heavenly Father reacts to his children when they enjoy the gift of life he gave them. He encourages us to



Plunkett

enjoy life. He longs for us to live life to its fullest. It gives him pleasure to watch his children live abundant lives. Life, God's gift to man, is to be celebrated!

At Christmas, my wife and I would observe our children as they sighed at a toy in a wish book or gazed longingly through a store window. I know from experience how it felt when we were able to surprise our children with the very gifts they wanted. If I experienced human joy, imagine how God-sized the joy our Heavenly Father feels when we accept and enjoy his gift of life!

Psalm 103:1-5 is a praise song unto the Lord. It recognizes many of the things God does for us each day, things that we often take for granted such as; the forgiveness of sins, the healing of diseases, redemption from hell, the showering of his love and compassion on us, the

giving of all good things, and the renewal of strength. All of these are qualities of life that our Heavenly Father gives to us as his children.

As children of God, we can also look forward to celebrating everlasting life in Heaven. Revelation 22: 1-5 describes heaven to us in a very limited way. The apostle John was shown the new Jerusalem where God's people will live forever. This eternal life will be lived in the presence of God, free from need, darkness, and curse.

One night, I happened by our oldest daughter's bedroom. I could hear sobs coming from within, so I knocked and entered her room. She was on her bed, crying as if her sixteen-year-old heart would break. "Daddy," she said, "I'm crying because I'm afraid of dying and going to heaven." It seemed that the heaven she expected (sitting on clouds, playing her harp, looking down on those still on earth, etc.) was a major

league bore. I had to agree with her! Then I reminded her of a scripture, I Corinthians 2:9 where it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear hear, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." I said to her, "There is so much more to heaven than you or I can ever know on this earth. In short, there is more to heaven than clouds and harps." She now has a new perspective on heaven.

The "Gift of Life" has been the plea of mankind down through the ages. No, not the plain, old-fashioned, untainted blood of sinner, but the pure, boundless, cleansing blood of a Savior that was born two thousand years ago.

"The Father gave the Son,
The Son gave the Spirit,
The Spirit gives us Life
So we can give the gift of love."

Plunkett is minister of music and adults at Clarksdale Church.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Preparing for action

Mark 1:1-20

By Dee McDermitt

The gospel of Mark, the shortest gospel and possibly the first to have been penned, is action-packed. The author, identified as John Mark in other scriptures, is the one who deserted the work for a time (Acts 16:38). Yet, God uses him, an unfaithful servant, to write about the faithful servant, Jesus Christ.

Scholars date Mark's work around 64 AD. It was written to the Christians in Rome who were enduring great suffering. His intent was to encourage them by identifying Jesus and reminding them of the suffering Jesus endured.

Mark doesn't go into detail

about Jesus' early life; he jumps directly into Jesus' ministry. He shows how God laid the foundation for Jesus' ministry through prophecy, through affirmation, through Jesus' spiritual preparation in the desert temptation, and through providing a support group of disciples.

Advance preparation (vv. 1-3, 7-8). Mark starts with the words "the beginning." Compare this to the first words of Genesis. In Genesis, God was involved in creating the world and its inhabitants. In Mark we see God creating a new work. Through Jesus, he would step into humanity in the flesh and



McDermitt

leave his unmistakable mark on his creation.

It is interesting to note that, while we call this book the gospel of Mark, Mark calls it "the gospel of Jesus Christ." We know "gospel" means good news. What a thoughtful way to begin a letter of encouragement to ones who were suffering. He reminds the Roman Christians of Isaiah's prophecy of the one who would prepare the way and then confirms the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Spiritual preparation (vv. 9-13). In verse 9, Jesus enters the picture. In four sentences, Mark recounts how he came from Nazareth, was baptized by John, affirmed by God, and sent into the wilderness to endure the temptation. Mark's concise writing style doesn't give us a play-by-play. But consider how God prepared for Jesus' min-

istry through these events.

Jesus had no need of baptism because he was sinless. His acceptance of it and participation in it showed his obedience to God as well as his identification with humanity. In addition, Jesus' status of sonship was confirmed in the vision of the Spirit coming down from heaven and remaining on him. John 1:31 says that the reason John the Baptist came was so that Jesus might be revealed. The voice from heaven was God's affirmation that this was indeed his son, and that he was pleased with him.

To further prepare him, Jesus was sent by the Spirit into the wilderness to endure loneliness and testing. It is clear that the purpose was for Jesus to face and overcome the temptations which would be common to his ministry. This was comforting to the Roman Christians who were in the midst of persecution and testing. They could be

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Where is your commitment?

Heb 1:1-4; Matt 16:13-23

By Carl M. White

The legend is told that when Jesus ascended to heaven he was met by an angel who wanted to know of the plans he left on earth to complete the work of the Kingdom. "Did you establish a new government?" the angel asked.

"No," Christ responded, "there is no new government."

"Did you call up a new army?" the angel asked.

"No," Christ said, "there is no new army."

"Then how will the work of the kingdom be carried forward?" the angel inquired.

Jesus said, "Well, there are these 12 men, but one of them turned out to be a traitor. I taught them, trained them, and



God who spoke through the prophets of old, has made his ultimate speech through his Son. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. He is the living Word.

A clear identification (Matt 16:13-16). Our commitment continues with the clear identification of Christ. At Caesarea Philippi Peter makes this remarkable confession. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (vs 16)

Note, this knowledge did not originate from within Peter. Jesus indicated that this was heavenly knowledge, revealed from God the Father. God wants people to know Jesus, and he is actively involved in the revelation of Christ to human lives.

A certain foundation (16:17-23). This foundational knowledge of Jesus as the Christ is not subject to a smorgasbord of applications, but directed

toward a certain construction. Like it or not, the church is that construction.

There is some sloppy thinking among some Christians today who say, "Jesus, yes, but the church, no!" Please note, the promise to overpower the gates of hell itself is not made to the YMCA or the FCA, but the church. The Bible says Christ loves the church and that he died for the church. It is questionable whether you can love Jesus and reject what he loves. The reason for the elevated position of the church is simple. The foundation of the church is Jesus himself.

A critical confrontation (16:21-23). One of the beautiful things about the Word of God is its realism. The heroes of scripture are all humans, each one flawed in their own peculiar way. Peter goes from a remarkable confession at Caesarea Philippi to a dishonorable rebuke almost immediately thereafter. Though he had

experienced a unique revelation from the Father, he still didn't get it. Jesus has to rebuke him in a critical confrontation.

Some might think Jesus' rebuke of Peter was rather harsh. Please understand, Jesus' purpose in coming was to die on the cross for our sins. Anything that would tempt him to follow any other path was satanic, even if the temptation came from a misunderstanding friend.

The critical issue is not the confrontation, but how Peter would respond to it. Would he leave, sulking because Jesus referred to him as Satan? Or, would this critical confrontation result in deeper understanding and an even deeper commitment to Christ?

As you follow Jesus, you too will face critical moments. It is our commitment to Jesus as Lord that carries us forward. Where is your commitment?

White is a member of First Church, Clinton

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive Director

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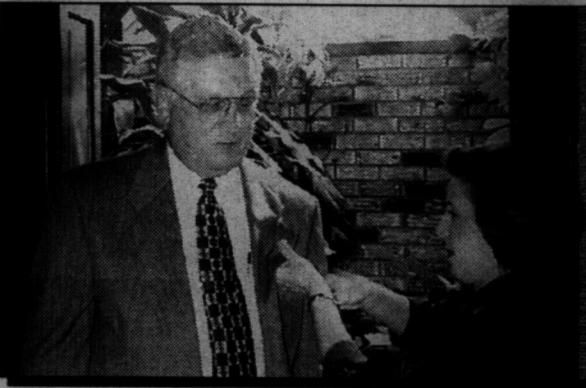
King and Thames



Thomas

The Board of Trustees of The Baptist Children's Village attended the annual holiday luncheon following their quarterly business meeting. Those presented service pins by Chrystelle Thames, director of public relations at The Village, were Robert King of Jackson for 30 years of service; Rev. Austin Moore of Southaven and Ruth Thomas of Clinton both for 5 years of service; and Charles W. Renfrow of Jackson for 1 year of service.

Ruth Thomas was also recognized as the new president of The Baptist Children's Village Board of Trustees. Mrs. Thomas and her husband reside in Clinton.



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Renfrow and Thames

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SOMETHING'S HAPPENING — The good news of God's love has spread through the villages of Bangladesh's hill country, resulting in 150 new churches among tribal peoples that had never heard of Christ. Leaders like Rana Bikram (left) and Kumar (second from right) are leading their Tripura tribal people to Jesus, and that makes veteran missionary R. T. Buckley (right) very happy. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

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DEP IQ FUDZZ QDN LE
TZQENI, DEP WQ FDNLF-
BLQP, DEP TADLFQ NUQ
EDOQ YB NUQ ZYAP
IYVA HYP, NUDN UDN
PQDZN MYEPAYVFZI
MLNU IYV: DEP OI
TQYTZQ FUDZZ EQJQA
WQ DFUDOQP.

GYQZ NMV: NMQENI-FLS

Clue: T = P

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm Fifty One One.

Missionaries changing things in Bangladesh

FENI, Bangladesh (BP) — Though the haze of alcohol fogged his mind, old Kumar saw clearly enough to know something was happening in the next village. Something powerful.

Whatever it was, he knew his own people needed it. Kumar, a Tripura (TREE-per-uh) tribal patriarch, saw the sufferings of his own village and felt despair. Food was increasingly scarce. Children and old people were dying from dysentery and diar-

A little church was born, and word spread about a God who really listened to prayer and answered with power. Village leaders like Kumar observed the new Christians.

"Then one day we went over and met with Kumar," Buckley recalls. "We told him we would like to come and share the story of Jesus with him. He said, 'We want you to come. We have watched these people who have become Christians. Something is happening. We don't know what it is, but they are different.'

That was a decade ago. Today, the centerpiece of Kumar's community is a church. Visitors hear children singing in the building. They're learning Bible songs and stories — and how to read — in a Baptist-sponsored tutorial program that gives them an educational beginning while they learn about Jesus.

The church building faces a fish pond originally stocked by Baptists. The church folk now manage the pond, sell the fish and use profits for church programs. Nearby they grow crops planted in SALT (Sloping Agricultural Land Technology) style, a method pioneered by Southern Baptist missionaries in the Philippines to help struggling Asian hill people like the Tripura.

Down the hill is a tube well, sunk by Baptists to provide fresh water from a deep spring. It not only protects the villagers from the disease-carrying river water they used to drink, but irrigates adjacent rice land, benefiting Tripura and Bengali alike.

Old Kumar proudly leads a tour of the village. "We are learning that without God and his help, we can do nothing," Kumar explains. "We used to offer sacrifices that did no good. When we heard it was only through Jesus that we could get forgiveness, we embraced Christ. When I made the decision, everyone else made the decision with me."

Kumar symbolizes a movement in the hill tracts of Bangladesh. "He was responsible for leading that group of people to Christ, kind of like Cornelius," Buckley observes. "We're getting so many requests to come in and share the gospel. It's difficult to keep up with all the opportunities."

Buckley and other missionaries have long labored with Bangladeshi Baptists to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the majority Bengali people. In recent years, however, they've spent more and more time working with tribal minority peoples like the Tripura.

Tribal peoples total 3 million

or more people in Bangladesh. But their extended ethnic families flow across political borders — into India and Myanmar.

As the gospel spreads among them, it crosses borders too. It also moves farther into the hills of Bangladesh — into areas strictly off-limits to missionaries because of political unrest and rebel activity.

"We haven't been anywhere the Lord hasn't gone ahead of us," Buckley says. "We can rush into these areas for Jesus, and when you get there you find he is already there. Somebody in there was already receptive to the Holy Spirit. We're just doing follow-up work."

That first congregation has multiplied to more than 150 churches in the hill region. Last summer leaders of another tribe, the Bongshi (BONG-shy), approached Baptists to declare, "We want to follow Jesus."

"We're sitting on a keg of dynamite," says Buckley, who's savoring a spiritual harvest after more than 30 years of hard labor in Bangladesh.

"When you walk up a path you've never walked before and you hear voices already singing, 'We praise you, we

praise you,' you know something is going on."

He cocks his cap, leans forward and adds, "If you aren't careful, you could get excited."

◆ Pray that many tribal patriarchs like Kumar will make decisions for Christ and lead whole communities — even whole peoples — to faith in him.

◆ Pray that the spiritual harvest gaining momentum among tribals in Bangladesh will spread across borders to reach millions of ethnically related people in India and Myanmar.

◆ Pray that the 50,000 Bongshi (BONG-shy) people, whose leaders approached Bengali Baptists last year and declared, "We want to follow Jesus," will do so!

◆ Pray that the new missionaries God is calling to Bangladesh during this harvest will respond in obedience.

◆ Pray that young "second-generation" tribal youth leaders will fully commit their own lives to Jesus as Lord (not just "inherit" their parents' decision) and then become effective teachers and disciplinarians among their people.

LifeAnswers



Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

My wife is completely disinterested in our marriage; I can understand how people fall into extramarital affairs. What can I do to get her attention?

You are on dangerous ground. You can be sure someone is out there looking for someone like you, and you could be in full-blown adultery before you know it. Most failed marriages don't die from sudden causes, but from long-term inattention. Husbands and wives get so busy with their own lives that they allow the home fires to go out. You must commit yourself to reigniting the smoldering embers of your marriage before those are gone, too. Take time to date each other, as you did before marriage. What attracted you to your mate? What moved you to want to spend the rest of your life with this woman? Find your way back to the joy and laughter that once marked your romance. Do your best to reopen lines of communication. Use more personal "I feel..." statements and stick to the issues rather than attacking her for perceived slights. Talk with your pastor or a Christian counselor for insight. Most

importantly, strengthen your personal prayer life and be persistent about praying together. Don't let the prowling Devil devour you! (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Our three-year-old won't give up her pacifier. How can we break this habit?

Help her find alternatives to this "comforter." Observe closely to determine her interests and activities, then get her involved in those things. When she begins to need the pacifier less and less, throw it away when she puts it down. Be truthful when she asks about it and if she goes for another pacifier, repeat the removal process until all the pacifiers in the house are gone. Be alert for signs she has found another comforter, such as a bottle, blanket, or stuffed animal. If she cries for a pacifier at bedtime, lay down with her and explain how she can find security in the love of the Heavenly Father. Pray with her. Play audio of soft Christian lullabies, and stay by her side until she falls asleep. She will eventually become more secure, but be patient, firm, and loving during this often-difficult process.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.